

*Iberian World Empires and the Globalization of Europe 1415-1668*

By Bartolomé Yun-Casalilla

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It is so difficult to get any book right, and not least in balancing coverage and novelty. So much about this volume might irritate specialists, or indeed readers of readily-available works, who are already aware of the historical significance of Iberian societies, the importance of composite monarchies, and the extent of early-modern globalisation. Each has been a major trend in the literature for decades, and there is a degree here of taking valuable specific work, in particular of growth and recession in urban networks, and employing that to provide another strand ... a familiar tale. Another criticism can come from a Portuguese perspective. In theory this is based on Iberian world empires, but, as the author, Professor of Early Modern History at Seville, notes at the outset his book is based on Castilian society in particular. That leads to a number of problems. As far as Spain is concerned, there is a downplaying of the Aragonese dimension, and, indeed, linked to this of the Italian linkage, such that Genoa was in many respects a 'Spanish' city, or, more to the point, 'Spain' as an international force a product of linkages to which Italian elements contributed greatly.

The coverage of Portugal would have been greatly enhanced by reading much readily available recent material, for example by Gabriel Paquette. The Luso-Atlantic area receives insufficient attention in the book, and, linked to that, slavery and the slave trade are key components of that world that not only deserve more attention from this author, but already have been treated in the literature. Yun-Casalilla essentially ignores Portuguese Africa. So, as a study in globalisation, this is a problematic work.

However, as a meditation based on a knowledgeable assessment of monetary flows and economic tensions, there is much more to offer; not least with the presentation of empire as both problem and solution for the landed and mercantile élites. This provides the dynamic for the particular globalisation at issue here, and it works well. Finances are then pushed to the fore across a range of topics, for example the policies of Olivares and the role of imperial issues in Portugal's drive for independence in 1640. The subsequent discussion of imperial comparison from the perspective of political economy is welcome. So, a lot of interest and value, but greatly oversold on novelty.

Jeremy Black